

Urban District Council of Chesham

REPORT

OF THE

Medical Officer of Health

For the Year 1944

T. P. EVANS, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.H.,

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH



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Council Offices,

High Street,

Chesham.

October, 1945.

Mr. Chairman and Councillors,

I have the honour to present my Annual Report for the year 1944.

The year's population figure for Chesham Urban District, as given by the Registrar General is 11,030, but this figure is arrived at by calculation. During the year the population figure, in fact, was subject to marked fluctuations, the reason being the increasing severity of the enemy's pilotless aerial activity. During the periods when their attacks were at their height, Chesham being a reception area, was grossly overcrowded and at one time the estimated population was in the neighbourhood of 14,000. By the end of the year, however, most of those who had become voluntary evacuees returned and thereby the overcrowding situation though never easy, became easier. Because of these periodic fluctuations, therefore, the only satisfactory means of ascertaining the figure is by calculation.

During the autumn, the water supply to the Vale in particular and that to the town in general were matters of some concern to the Council; the former because the temporary solution of the problem whereby the Council provided a domestic water supply by water-cart to residents of the Vale, was felt to be unsatisfactory, and the latter because a Statutory Water Undertaking, under a Defence Regulation, applied for permission to sink a trial borehole at Hawridge—only a short distance from the Vale. The Council feared that if permission were granted by the Ministry, it would have an adverse effect upon the Council's own supply and thereby diminish still further the already short supply of water to the Vale, and also diminish the amount of water available to the Council for the use as a Water Undertaking within its own area. For these reasons the Council opposed the application but after being given certain assurances and obtaining other safeguards, the Council withdrew its opposition and the statutory Water Undertaking was granted permission to

sink a trial borehole. The matter, however, was felt to be of sufficient importance to lead the Council to review the sufficiency of its own Water Undertaking.

In August, 1944, at the request of the Ministry of Food, the Council decided to appoint an Assistant Rodent Officer to assist in the day-to-day work of your Sanitary Inspector who had previously been appointed Rodent Officer. The conservation of food supplies in the fifth year of the war was a matter of paramount importance to the well-being of the whole nation. More especially is this so when it is remembered that the value of foodstuff spoilt by rodents in the United Kingdom per annum has been assessed at two million tons—a quantity of foodstuff that represents considerable shipping space in war-time.

The percentage figures for Immunisation against Diphtheria continue to be satisfactory, and once again the County Health Visitors have given us valuable assistance by their systematic house-to-house survey. This together with the exhibition of a film “short” at the local cinema warning parents of the dangers of Diphtheria and the value of immunisation accounts for the high percentages which were as follows :

0-5 Age Group
98.1%

5-15 Age Group.
97.5%

During the year, because of the facilities for treatment provided by the County Council at Germain Street School Clinic, and those provided by the Public Assistance Committee, the incidence of scabies and other verminous diseases has not been high, but the Council will need to consider the provision of a suitable cleansing station for the treatment of these diseases should one or the other of these facilities be withdrawn for any reason.

It is once again my very pleasing duty to record my thanks for their active co-operation to the officers of the Council and especially to Mr. Brogan your Sanitary Inspector and finally to you, Mr. Chairman and Councillors, for your ready assistance and kindly support throughout the year.

I am,

Your obedient Servant,

T. P. EVANS,
(Medical Officer of Health).

ARRANGEMENT OF THE REPORT

A General and Vital Statistics

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C Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

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Public Cleansing
Refuse Disposal and Salvage

D Housing

E Inspection and Supervision of Food

Milk Supply
Meat Slaughterhouses

F Infectious Diseases

STAFF

Medical Officer of Health

T. P. Evans, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., D.P.H.

Sanitary Inspector

G. E. Brogan. A.R.SAN.I., M.S.I.A.

Assistant Rodent Officer

G. J. Dobson

A Statistics and Social Conditions of the Area

Population	11,030
Area (Acres) of District	3,489
Number of Inhabitable Houses (per Rate Book)	3,310
Rateable Value of Area	£67,542
Sum represented by 1d. Rate	£265

Births

Birth Rate per 1,000 population	19.3
Birth Rate England and Wales	17.6
<i>Males</i> <i>Females</i> <i>Total</i>	

(a) Live Births :

Legitimate	102	98	200
Illegitimate	8	5	13

(b) Still Births :			Male	Female	Total
Legitimate	..	..	1	4	5
Illegitimate	..	..	—	—	—
Still Rate per 1,000 total births — 23.4.					

Deaths

Death Rate per 1,000 population	..	..	11.6
Death Rate, England and Wales	..	..	11.6

Diseases :			Males	Females	Total
1. Heart Diseases	..	..	15	19	34
2. Cancer	..	..	13	12	25
3. Cerebral Haemorrhage	..	..	5	8	13
4. Bronchitis	..	..	4	3	7
5. Pulmonary Tuberculosis	..	..	4	0	4
6. Other circulatory diseases	..	..	5	2	7
7. Diabetes	..	..	0	1	1
8. Pneumonia	..	..	3	1	4
9. Influenza	..	..	4	3	7
10. Peptic Ulcer	..	..	1	0	1
11. Other digestive disturbances	..	..	2	1	3
12. Nephritis	..	..	2	3	5
13. Diarrhoea (under 2 years)	..	..	—	—	—
14. Premature Birth	..	..	1	2	3
15. Congenital Birth causes	..	..	1	0	1
16. Road Traffic Accidents	..	..	0	1	1
17. Suicide	..	..	1	0	1
18. Other violent causes	..	..	0	1	1
19. All other causes	..	..	4	4	8
20. Whooping Cough	..	..	1	0	1
21. Acute Poliomyelitis	..	..	0	1	1
22. Other respiratory diseases	..	..	0	1	1
			66	63	129

(a) Deaths for puerperal causes	..	..	..	Nil
(b) Deaths of Infants under one year of age	..	..	..	9

			Males	Females	Total
Legitimate	..	..	3	4	7
Illegitimate	..	..	1	1	2

Deaths of Infants per 1,000 legitimate live births = 45.0

Infant Mortality : All Infants per 1,000 live births = 42.2

England and Wales 46.0

B General Provisions of Health Services in the Area

1. *Laboratory Facilities.*

Laboratory facilities are provided by the Emergency Public Health Services Park Place, Oxford.

2. *Ambulance Service.*

It is once again a pleasing duty to place on record the splendid services performed by the Chesham St. John Ambulance car. The transport activities of this ambulance are well illustrated by the following figures which are published by courtesy of the Divisional Superintendent, Mr. E. H. Coles, 26, Cameron Road, Chesham.

		1942	1943	1944
(a) Removals to Hospital	..	652	882	1,139
(b) Accidents attended	.. ..	57	70	74
(c) Military Service cases	..	24	39	44
(d) Total	.. ..	733	991	1,257
(e) Mileage	.. ..	16,426	17,194	20,783

It is a very pleasant duty once again to thank all the officers and personnel of the Brigade who gave their valuable services to the town in such an unobtrusive and unheralded manner.

3. *Nursing in the Home.*

Nurses Jermy and Betts left Chesham during the year, and were replaced by

Nurse Dentus, S.R.N., C.M.B.

Nurse Parry, S.R.N., C.M.B., whose address is 305, Berkhamstead Road, Chesham.

4. *Clinics and Hospitals.*

There has been no major change in the dual services provided at the Germain Street Clinic, viz., a Minor Ailments Clinic and a Specialised Service Clinic.

The presence of two large Emergency Medical Services Hospitals in two areas within a short distance from Chesham, e.g., Amersham Emergency Medical Services Hospital and Ashridge Emergency Medical Services Hospital, brings the services of these large organisations within easy reach of Chesham and full use continues to be made of such services for such cases as require them.

During the year, the Venereal Diseases Scheme of the Bucks County Council established clinics at King Edward VII Hospital, Windsor and High Wycombe.

C Sanitary Circumstances in the Area

Summary of Sanitary Inspector's Visits :

Slaughterhouses	..	..	..	..	..	731
Dwelling Houses	..	..	..	..	..	253
Infectious Diseases	..	..	..	..	..	34
Disinfections	..	..	..	..	..	12
Factories	..	..	..	..	..	32
Butchers	..	..	..	..	..	53
Grocers	..	..	..	..	..	69
Dairies	..	..	..	..	..	60
Farms	..	..	..	..	..	35
Miscellaneous	..	..	..	..	..	204
Interviews	..	..	..	..	..	235
Milk Samples	..	..	..	..	..	44
Water Samples	..	..	..	..	..	6
Verminous Premises	..	..	..	..	..	51
Disinfestations	..	..	..	..	..	33
Rat Infestations	..	..	..	..	..	7

Infestation Order, May, 1943

In August, 1944, the Council at the suggestion of the Infestation Division of the Ministry of Food, appointed an Assistant Rodent Officer to assist the day to day work of the Sanitary Inspector who had previously been appointed Rodent Officer.

This formed part of a nation-wide attack under the direction of and co-ordinated by the Ministry of Food. In the fifth year of war it was of paramount importance that the nation's food supply was neither destroyed nor fouled by the action of rats and mice, and it was stated authoritatively that two million tons of food were being fouled or destroyed every year. In these circumstances it was vitally necessary to plan a nation-wide attack on these food-destroying, disease-carrying vermin.

Hitherto this Council, like many others, has had its own scheme for dealing with this menace, the Council paying 2d. per rat-tail brought in by the public, but the Ministry does not look with favour upon such arrangements and decided not to support such schemes. The primary consideration which influenced the Ministry in this attitude was that such a scheme has no place in the systematic extermination of the rat population ; the scheme was too casual. The casual presentation of bundles of rat-tails at the Council office is not evidence of effective action which must at the outset be aimed at

reaching and destroying the hard core of infestation, because a high cumulative total of rats destroyed may well point to the maintenance of a high level of rat population. Action to be effective must be based upon careful survey of the rat population.

In this connection it is as well to recall the Rats and Mice (Destruction) Act, 1919, which requires the occupier of a premises to take the necessary steps to get rid of rats on his premises, yet under the casual system hitherto obtaining in Chesham, the occupier is entitled to a reward for the number of tails he may collect and deliver. In these circumstances, the Ministry state that such a reward is not an appropriate charge upon public funds. Nevertheless an assurance of financial aid has been given to local authorities which observe the procedure laid down by the Ministry. This assurance incurs no additional charge of the Rate Fund of the Local Authority by reason of intensification of rat extermination effort, except so far as concerns treatment of properties in its own occupation, for which the local authority is under statutory responsibility as occupier. In other words any local authority that complies with the procedure attaching to the financial offer of the Ministry is assured of reimbursement of costs in excess of a certain figure in maintaining inspection and service of notices in respect of private properties, and also in maintaining an organisation for treatment service at private properties after credit has been allowed for recovery of proper charges from the responsible parties.

The question of recovery of proper charges from the occupiers involves no new principle as the Statutory obligation has been laid upon the shoulders of the occupier for the past twenty-five years. The further question of whether the occupier is responsible for the harbouring of rats and mice in his premises is one of fact, the conditions at the premises have a direct bearing upon the continued presence of the animals upon the premises. In this matter of recovery from the occupiers, however, the Ministry leaves the matter to the discretion of the local authority, on the merits of a particular case as to whether a particular occupier is responsible and therefore chargeable.

Water Supply.

The whole question of water supply and in particular a description of those parts of the Urban District which are

served by the various water undertakings was more fully described in my Report to you of 1943.

Briefly the Undertakings within the Chesham Urban District are as follows :

(a) *Chesham Urban District Council*, supply a part of the district which can conveniently be described as the area of the Urban District prior to the extension of boundaries to their present position. The area of supply is 1,357 acres being approximately 40 per cent of the Urban Area (3,489 acres), but it contains about 76 per cent of the total number of dwelling-houses.

(b) *Rickmansworth and Uxbridge Valley Water Co.*, serves what we might call the North-West area which extends roughly from Chartridge Lane to the west side of Vale Road in the northern part of the district. Within this district in Pednor Road there are approximately ten dwelling-houses which have individual boreholes and hand pumps. No complaints have been received in respect of these during the year except that the water level in the bore holes has been known to be low.

On the west side of Vale Road, however, there are sixteen cottages which are dependent on shallow surface wells for their water supply. During the year as drought conditions increased the water became so polluted as to be unfit for domestic purposes in the raw state, and the Council were compelled to deliver a weekly bulk supply for the use of the residents. Later, these springs dried up altogether.

These wells have been closely watched throughout the year many samples have been taken for bacteriological examination.

(c) *The Great Berkhamstead Water Co.* serves the North-East area which comprises the fringe formed by the difference in the two boundaries, the old and the new, and which extends roughly from the east side of Vale Road, Nashleigh Hill to Lye Green Road.

(d) *Amersham and Beaconsfield Water Co* supplies the southern area mainly Bois Moor Road, which comprises a very small part of the district.

Generally speaking I am satisfied with the purity of the water from all the undertakings within the Urban District of Chesham both in regard to quality and quantity.

I must say, however, that in common with other parts of the country the effect of the drought has been noticeable, but the Council were well aware of the consequences and undertook a thorough survey of all fittings to prevent waste of water.

Bacteriological examination of the water supply and chemical analyses are frequently made and copies of these are to be found in Appendix I. The supplies receive no treatment other than chlorination and the waters are not liable to have plumbo-solvent action.

The number of dwelling-houses having no internal water supply is small, being approximately two per cent of the total number of dwellings and many of these would have been dealt with under the Housing Acts but for the commencement of hostilities.

Public Cleansing.

The frequency with which the Council's Cesspool Emptier has been called to render urgent service during the past year has fully justified its acquisition by the Council. The number of emptyings was 88.

In addition to service within the Chesham Urban District the use of the machine is extended to premises within the districts of neighbouring authorities who have no facilities for emptying cesspools.

Refuse Disposal.

In my report of last year, I said that the Asheridge Tip was likely to be filled in the early part of 1945, and an alternative site in Lye Green Road was investigated. This site, taking all things into consideration has not proved suitable, and the Public Health Committee has given serious consideration to the provision of an incinerator as the best method of refuse disposal—a decision which is to be commended.

SALVAGE RETURN FOR THE YEAR 1944.

			<i>Tons Cwts. lbs.</i>			<i>£</i>	<i>s.</i>	<i>d.</i>
Waste Paper .. ..	..	..	103	7	0	682	19	2
Scrap Metals .. ..	..	..	32	3	86	49	18	0
Textiles .. ..	..	..	4	7	4	45	15	0
Bottles and Jars ..	..	..	5	16	0	17	8	0
Bones .. ..	..	..	1	6	48	6	4	8
Rubber .. ..	..	..	2	12	28	6	10	7
Totals .. ..	..	..	149	12	54	£808	15	5

D Housing

There is little to add to my previous reports under this heading. There has been no routine Housing Inspection during the year except for the investigation of complaints. Any work required has of necessity been limited to that of an essential character.

I shall not dwell on the lack of accommodation or the conditions of overcrowding which exist in Chesham. These are part of a national problem which only the provision of new houses, either temporary or permanent can solve.

The Council is fully alive to its own responsibilities in this matter, and their post-war schemes include housing sites in Bellingdon Road and Missenden Road. As part of their arrangements to expedite the provision of accommodation, the Council appointed an architect to prepare the necessary layout and site plans for their permanent housing schemes which involve the erection of 200 houses in the first two years after the cessation of hostilities.

In addition to the provision of permanent houses, the Council applied for permission to erect 100 temporary houses, but this application was refused by the Ministry. On receipt of a further application from the Council the Ministry reconsidered its decision and granted Chesham 30 dwellings, a number which was subsequently increased to 35.

E Inspection and Supervision of Food

(a) Milk.

The Rationalisation Scheme of the Ministry of Food continues to be well received in the area, and the work of distribution is carried on by six groups of retailers.

One producer of ordinary milk was added to the register during the year making a total of nine. One producer is registered as a T.T. producer and two others as Accredited Producers. Forty-four samples of milk were taken during the year and submitted for examination, the results being satisfactory.

Cowshed and dairy premises continue to be well maintained.

(b) Slaughterhouses.

The centralisation of the slaughter of cattle and sheep continues to be carried out at the Co-operative Slaughterhouse and gives entire satisfaction.

The Sanitary Inspector is responsible for all food inspection, and during the year made 731 visits for this purpose.

Number of Animals Killed.

<i>Bulls</i>	<i>Beasts</i>	<i>Cows</i>	<i>Calves</i>	<i>Sheep</i>	<i>Pigs</i>
46	1,176	169	1,202	5,347	27

(c) Condemned Foodstuffs.

Mutton	..	..	..	..	..	109 lbs.
Beef	..	..	..	..	..	14,337 lbs.
Wet Fish	..	..	..	..	..	70 lbs.
Butter	..	..	..	..	..	9½ lbs.
Rice	..	..	..	..	..	13 lbs.
Jam	..	..	..	..	..	77½ lbs.
Luncheon Meat	..	..	..	..	..	142 lbs.
Tins of Meat	..	..	..	..	..	297 lbs.
Tins of Milk	..	..	..	..	..	71
Tins of Fish	..	..	..	..	..	184
Tins of Vegetables	..	..	..	..	..	59
Tins of Fruit	..	..	..	..	..	15
Eggs	..	..	..	..	..	1,067
Oranges	..	..	..	..	..	115 lbs.
Toffees	..	..	..	..	..	7 lbs.
Apple Rings	..	..	..	..	..	7 lbs.
Cheese	..	..	..	..	..	36½ lbs.
Soups	..	..	..	..	..	36
Bacon	..	..	..	..	..	59½ lbs.

F Prevalence and Control of Infectious Diseases*Diphtheria Immunisation.*

This was reported upon fully in my annual Report for 1943. The facilities at the County Council Clinic in Germain Street have continued to be at our disposal throughout the year, and the enthusiastic assistance of the County Health Visitors, Nurses Lyal and Tanton have been of great service in this matter.

During the autumn of 1944 a house-to-house survey was undertaken of those homes where it was known that there were children in the vulnerable 0-5 group who had not been immunised.

During the year one case only of Diphtheria occurred in Chesham. The case was a boy of 10 years of age who had not been immunised, and who attended a school outside the area.

Notifiable Diseases.

<i>Disease.</i>	<i>Cases Notified.</i>	<i>Hospital.</i>	<i>Deaths.</i>
Scarlet Fever ...	24	24	Nil
Diphtheria ...	1	1	Nil
Measles ...	2	—	Nil
Erysipelas ...	1	—	Nil
Pneumonia ...	2	1	Nil
Whooping Cough ...	3	3	Nil

Tuberculosis.

New Cases.					Deaths.			
Age Periods.	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
1-5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
5-15	—	—	1	1	—	—	—	—
15-25	2	1	—	1	—	—	—	—
25-35	—	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
35-45	3	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
45-55	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
55-65	1	—	—	—	1	—	—	—
Total ...	7	2	1	2	4	—	—	—

Appendix I

The Counties Public Health Laboratories.

ANALYSIS OF A SAMPLE OF WATER received from CHESHAM URBAN DISTRICT COUNCIL.....

Labelled : Borehole, Waterworks Depot, Berkhamstead Road, Chesham.....

Chemical Results in Parts per 100,000.

Appearance : Bright—very few particles of mineral debris.....	
Turbidity : Less than 5 parts per million, Silica scale.....	
Colour	Normal
Reaction pH	Neutral : 7.1
Electric Conductivity at 20° C.....	435
Chlorine in Chlorides.....	0.9
Hardness : Total.....	25.0
Nitrogen in Nitrates.....	0.32
Free Ammonia.....	0.0000
Albuminoid Ammonia.....	0.0000
Oxygen Absorbed in 4 hrs. at 27° C.....	0.000
Metals	absent
" Free chlorine reaction ".....	absent
Odour	Nil
Free Carbonic Acid.....	2.6
Total Solids, dried at 180° C.	29.0
Alkalinity as Calcium Carbonate	22.5
Temporary...20.5 Permanent...4.5.....	
Nitrogen in Nitrites	absent
Ammoniacal Nitrogen.....	
Albuminoid Nitrogen	

Bacteriological Results.

Number of " Bacteria " growing on Agar per cc. or ml. in :

	1 day at 37° C.	2 days at 37° C.	3 days at 20° C.
	0	0	1
Presumptive Coliform Reaction	Present	.....	Absent 100 c.c.
Bact. coli	Present	.....	Absent 100 c.c.
Cl. welchii Reaction	Present	.....	Absent 100 c.c.

This sample is practically clear and bright in appearance, neutral in reaction and free from iron and other metals. The water is hard in character although not to an abnormal degree, contains no excess of saline or mineral matter in solution and is of the highest standard of organic and bacterial purity.

These results are very satisfactory and consistent with a pure and wholesome water, suitable for the purposes of a public supply.

Appendix II.

The Counties Public Health Laboratories.

ANALYSIS OF A SAMPLE OF WATER received from AMERSHAM
BEACONSFIELD AND DISTRICT WATER COMPANY.....
Labelled : Coleshill Water Tower. (Direct from adjoining main).....

Chemical Results in Parts per 100,000.

Appearance : Bright—few particles of mineral debris.....	
Colour	Normal
Odour	Nil
Reaction pH.....	Neutral : 7.2
Free Carbonic Acid.....	2.1
Electric Conductivity at 20° C.....	450
Total Solids, dried at 180° C.....	30.0
Chlorine in Chlorides.....	1.2
Alkalinity as Calcium Carbonate.....	24.0
Hardness : Permanent 3.5.....Temporary 22.0.....Total 25.5.....	
Nitrogen in Nitrates.....	0.20
Nitrogen in Nitrites.....	absent
Free Ammonia.....	0.0000
Ammoniacal Nitrogen.....	
Albuminoid Ammonia.....	0.0000
Albuminoid Nitrogen.....	
Oxygen Absorbed in 4 hrs. at 27° C.....	0.000
Metals.....	Iron : 0.003.....Other metals absent.....
Free chlorine reaction.....	absent

Bacteriological Results.

Number of " Bacteria " growing on Agar per cc. or ml. in :

	1 day at 37° C.	2 days at 37° C.	3 days at 20° C.
	0	1	2
Presumptive Coliform Reaction	Present	Absent	100 c.c.
Bact. Coli.	Present	Absent	100 c.c.
Cl. Welchii Reaction	Present	Absent	100 c.c.

This sample is reasonably clear and bright in appearance, neutral in reaction and free from metals apart from an insignificant trace of iron. The water is hard in character, although not to an abnormal or excessive degree, contains no excess of saline or mineral matter in solution and is of the highest standard of organic and bacterial purity. It is therefore considered pure and wholesome in character and suitable for the purposes of a public supply.

Appendix III.

The Counties Public Health Laboratories.

ANALYSIS OF A SAMPLE OF WATER received from RICKMANSWORTH AND UXBRIDGE VALLEY WATER COMPANY.....

Labelled : Great Missenden Pumping Station—Raw Water delivery.....

No. 3 Borehole.....

Chemical Results in Parts per 100,000.

Appearance : Clear and bright.....	
Colour	Normal
Odour	Nil
Reaction pH Neutral.....	7.1
Free Carbonic Acid.....	2.8
Electric Conductivity at 20° C.....	480
Total Solids, dried at 180° C.....	32.0
Chlorine in Chlorides.....	1.0
Alkalinity as Calcium Carbonate.....	24.5
Hardness : Total, 27.0.....Temporary, 22.5.....Permanent, 4.5.....	
Nitrogen in Nitrates.....	0.40
Nitrogen in Nitrites.....	Absent
Free Ammonia.....	0.0000
Ammoniacal Nitrogen.....	
Albuminoid Ammonia.....	0.0000
Albuminoid Nitrogen.....	
Oxygen Absorbed in 4 hrs. at 27° C.....	0.000
Metals	Absent

Bacteriological Results.

Number of " Bacteria " growing on Agar per cc. or ml. in :

	1 day at 37° C.	2 days at 37° C.	3 days at 20° C.
	0	0	34
Presumptive Coliform Reaction	Present	Absent	100 c.c.
Bact. coli	Present	Absent	100 c.c.
Cl. welchii Reaction	Present	Absent	100 c.c.

This sample is clear and bright in appearance, neutral in reaction and free from iron and other metals. The water is hard in character but not to an abnormal degree, contains no excess of salinity or mineral constituents in solution and is of a high standard of organic and bacterial purity.

These results are normal, very satisfactory, and consistent with a pure and wholesome water suitable for public supply purposes.

